

## APPENDIX 4.8

**Fictitious names have been used throughout the interview**

### INTERVIEWS – FACULTY

**We're starting now**

(FAC 1) Ok I think the first thing I'd like to say is that I think the principles of the new curriculum, of self-directed learning and facilitating learning and teaching have been taken on by the Department to varying degrees. Some colleagues have taken a lot of it and others not quite so much, but I think it has influenced the teaching and learning in the Department by and large. However, quite powerfully I think that the old fashioned lecture mode to a large class and then just simply expecting students to absorb the knowledge from that, I think that has changed a lot. I think there's a lot of sort of problem based small group teaching. Certainly, certainly in the areas where I deliver my teaching, very seldom I don't think I ever give a traditional lecture any more.

**Ok that was going to be my next question. In terms of, you've just said that it has influenced the way we teach in the Department. Now do you see that more with the senior lecturers or the junior lecturers or across the board in terms of the positive influence?**

It's difficult to say because I don't really know what people do in their classrooms. But from conversations with various people I think it's more experienced teachers that have taken the new principles on board more than the more junior teachers. Yeah.

**And does the Department then address that in terms of trying to get the junior teachers?**

Yeah, I think not enough, certainly not, no, no

**Ok. And the role, your role as a facilitator?**

I think that my role as a facilitator has I think I've always naturally been more of a facilitator than a dictator, but I since, since the new curriculum and all the reading and the problem based learning principles I have become more at ease and more validated in that kind of way of teaching in facilitating more and empowering the students more: to ask the questions, to try and find their own answers, to a more of a dialogue with students than just a one way bulimic education where you feed it through a funnel into their heads and they vomit it back in the exams and you give them ticks.

**And have you had any feedback from the students with respect to how you teach them? And what kind of feedback has it been?**

Look that's very difficult because students will not give you negative feedback. But I've had lots of positive feedback, but you know, that's, uhm, one always treats that with caution. What's happened is that the present second year class whose teaching Dave and I took over have been telling the third year class what a good time they are having and how much they're learning and the third years have said 'why didn't you teach us last year?' You know. Yeah, I've always had lots of positive feedback.

**Back to your comment about the third years asking why you haven't why you didn't teach them last year. But you did teach, even though it wasn't for what you're teaching the second years for this year, you did teach them – no, you did PBL**

They wanted to know why I didn't teach them the mechanical course

**Ok**

Because the second years are having such a good time and they're learning so much

**Ok**

And I've had the same from the Technicians as well. The Technicians were a bit at sea. And that's because it was a more inexperienced teacher doing the course last year. You know, not because I'm better or so, but I'm very experienced

**And then the difference between the junior years that you teach and the senior years that you teach, what have you found?**

Uhm (*long pause about 9 seconds*)

**In the teaching?**

In the teaching...

**Or the learning**

My best – in the learning. Ok I find that the more junior years are terribly hungry and very keen about dentistry. And the more senior years tend to get a little bit more disenchanting, they are disenchanted. They are under pressure, they almost just want to pass the exams and get it behind them. Whereas the junior classes are much more open and they want to know just for the sake of

knowing and not merely just for passing. My teaching I think – one kind of, I kind of stratify it with the junior ones. It's more general obviously. Just laying the ground work, a foundation. With the senior students it is more specific and I expect more out of them than the more junior students. As far as teaching methods go, I think I'm more of a facilitator again with both the junior and the senior students.

**And do you see a change through the years that you've been doing teaching with the transformed curriculum principles?**

Yes I see a change. One of the changes is that so many of our students come back and want to teach in the Institute. You know, when I was a student, we just wanted to flee because it was so awful and so authoritarian. And students, I get a feeling that students are more empowered, that they are more kind of grown up, they don't just regurgitate stuff and try to pass tests and exams. They think a little bit more. Hopefully...

*Laughter from both*

**Yeah. In the clinics, how have you found them compared to the tutorials? Now concentrating on the senior years?**

To the senior years

**4 to 5**

As compared to previous students?

**Yes**

I think they are more proficient, because they start clinical work earlier and their exposure to dentistry starts in the first year. So I think they are I mean if I compare third years with third years in the old curriculum, they did not even do any surgery work. They only got into the surgery work in the fourth year. So I find them more competent in removable pros.

**Uhm**

I find them more competent

**And do they have the necessary background knowledge in order to handle the clinical cases now or back then?**

I think more now. I really do, yeah

**Now taking a different aspect. In terms of the resources, uhm concerns about, first of, concerns about patient management systems – have you had any issues with that or have you heard any comments or concerns from the students with respect to booking patients, availability of patients, management of patient records etc.**

Huge issues. Everything is a total mess and it doesn't seem to be improving, it seems to be getting worse

**How do you then manage that for say the group that you teach?**

Management by crisis

**Explain that**

I really don't have the time or energy to sort out the systems

**But for the group that you say**

For the group that I teach, I just advise them to do things early – book patients early, even to keep their record cards which is against the rules, because otherwise they get lost at the front desk and I just tell them that they have to take a huge amount of responsibility for the booking, for phoning their patients and reminding them, for making sure that everything that they need is available, because it's not going to be done for them.

**Ok**

And if the files are lost I'm not prepared to cancel a patient I just carry on keeping file s illegally

**Have you considered (*laughter*)**

I do

**Have you, no, the illegal part not the continuing**

Yeah

**Have you considered any other methods or ways of dealing with say files that go missing and how to support the students without them having to keep the files with them, the original files, that is?**

I have raised this matter in meetings, various departmental and school meetings and no-see-um for years and nothing seems to happen, so I've actually given up on that route. I don't think it works. I don't think the administration is capable of sorting out our problems and I think we just have to live in the jungle and look out for ourselves.

**Ok. And then, in terms of the support that the school and the department and say the lecturers, give to the students, for that particular issue and also for things like notes, what things spring to mind for you where students have to do a lot of their own photocopying, and though they have to pay for the photocopying; their fees include payment for notes and extra materials; how have you or the department or school tried to address that?**

I don't know how the department or the school have tried to address it. I certainly do a lot of photocopying for the students. I in any case like to give them notes on whatever I do and that frees me up to have a freer discussion for the notes are very structured and all the information is there. Ok and then the actual so-called lecture often takes the form of a 'case of what is the main problem that we need to address today' and 'what do you feel' and 'Ok let's follow that up and discuss it' and 'what do you mean by that' and 'what do you think' and you know that kind of problem solving exercise to understand the central issues in a particular area, and then the details are the notes and I point them out to them, where the details are. And those kinds of things are always, I mean, every time I have a lecture I've always got a packet of stuff to give them, and I do that myself. It's so easy for me to do it.

**And as, still on the notes issue, as chair, as a former chair of EDUCOM, was this issue raised by the student council reps in EDUCOM about having to make their own, having to copy their own notes say if a lecturer gives them one set of notes for the class of forty? Has it ever been raised?**

Not as far as I remember, no

**Ok. And the interaction between the student council reps and EDUCOM, how has that been through the years?**

(pause) Lively. It's the only meeting that the students have attended regularly. Whenever I go to Faculty Board or any other meetings, committees, where students have designated representation, there's always a complaint that the students don't come. And I think the reason is that there is very good dialogue with the students on EDUCOM; that we did respect them, we took their issues seriously and we responded. Whereas in other school or Faculty meetings I have heard students

being pooh poohed and put down and being told 'you don't have the experience to be able to judge us' None of the other committees do the students attend. They're attending EDUCOM.

**Are there committees that the students have representation on apart from EDUCOM?**

At all. All the school committees and Faculty, must have student representation.

**And then**

In their constitution, but the students don't come. And of course, the

**Management**

Uh members of the committee say 'ooh yes of course they are pathetic and they are not interested anyway

**And the interaction between, I know it may be slightly off – the interaction between the DSC and the school management because they are supposed to have regular meetings with school management. Have you heard anything?**

Uhm, not really, but the impression I get is that, I don't know if it's still like that, maybe it's changing but up till recently, it's always been the biggest shloops that were elected onto the Student Council and the ones that they felt would smooth their way and I don't know, they don't go to School Executive. I don't think they have interaction with them

**Well I'm not sure**

Head of school, I'm not sure about that

**I think they, well my understanding is that they have regular meetings with the Head of school as the DSC, but I don't know. I'm also getting feedback that that has not been happening as regularly as it did previously**

Also I don't think that they're very empowered and proactive

**For that particular thing or**

About student issues. The students are supposed to be

**The students or management**

No the students. Because surely that kind of interaction is supposed to be about bringing student issues and sorting them out

**But then if they then do it with EDUCOM, you see, where you get student representation in EDUCOM, and most of the reps are part of the DSC**

Yes, yes

**There's a misalignment there**

Yes, yes, definitely. Definitely

**Ok the role of the yearbooks. What's your philosophy on that? And do you find it effective from a student perspective and from staff?**

Yeah, we've reviewed this. We started off by putting in all the subjects then we decided we will only put in OHSC, in the year books and that made it slightly manageable. It's a lot of work. So clearly one doesn't want to do it if it's not so useful. So then it's now just OHSC and it's not that much work because everyone is now in the groove. Everyone sends their stuff along and it's quite easy for the coordinators to put it all together and issue it. It's going quite well now. We considered it at EDUCOM whether we should transform the yearbooks, make them shorter, whether some stuff should be excluded or other stuff included and I did sort of informal questioning of the students, one can't call it a survey, and most of them feel that it's very useful. You know, some of them say 'it's our bible'

**Is it? Junior or senior or across the board – students?**

(pause) More senior. I think more senior. I haven't spoken to the first or second years if that's what you mean by junior. But like third, fourth and fifth years. Most of them find it, they would feel lost without it. Yeah, they do read it. One of them asked 'Do you read it?' and she said 'No, but my friend does and she tells me everything'

**A lot of the concerns from the students are with respect to the scheduling of assessments, and that they don't get that information and I know if I'm right, that the yearbook is supposed to have all that information but I know that the yearbooks though, don't have the schedule of assessments**

Ok the third year yearbook does

**Uhm hum**

For three years now

**Ok**

It has had the schedule of assessments. The fourth year, I think also has. Second year yearbook has it now for the first time this year

**For all the OHSC or just the Department?**

All the OHSC

**OK**

I don't know if the second year yearbook has the OHSC and the Medical School subjects. The third year yearbook has all the Medical School subjects and the different components of the OHSC

**OK**

All of that is in the yearbook. And that is how the students know that they should be getting it because it's inside the yearbooks but I think fourth year has some of it and I don't know about the final year. I know last year the final year ran around like chickens trying to sort out clashes and this and that but the third years have definitely had it and they've had it for three years now

**Oh, that's good**

Yeah

**Because they're some of the issues that came out during the student interviews: that they had extra assessments which were not scheduled in the yearbook come up and that they had to do and that some were scheduled and they never got to do. They didn't get to do all of them, they had three booked or scheduled and then the / a department would decide that particular department would decide to just do one and that would be OK. Or another department had nothing scheduled and then in the one week have like four, three or four assessments without engaging the students in agreement to doing the assessments**

Yeah, you know I can't, I would be lying that it's, if I said it hasn't happened ever with the third years, but certainly we keep to the assessment schedule. We keep to it. Dr Boitumelo puts up the dates and everything and everything happens even the PBL, integrated tests, when they have to hand in



projects, when they have to hand in their themes files. Everything is there. And we do keep to it. We keep to it and I tell the students that last year there was one case that the students wanted to change and I said 'No, we are not going to do that, we don't do that.' And that was the last time they ever approached me to change something.

### **That's good**

So no, the third year is very tight, but I mean, you see, I'm coordinating it. I don't know. Dr Mistry is coordinating second year and I know that this year she, for the first time, has a schedule of all the assessments. It remains to be seen how well they keep to it. You know.

**Uhm, because the challenge with the fifth year for the department was, there were individual schedules brought out within two to three weeks of the programme starting. You know the students asked for changes and that the deadlines, the due dates, were flexible and it caused a lot of tension because at the end you're rushing to get things done**

Yes, yeah, I was aware of that. And then some members of staff suddenly decided to go to the game reserve for a week. And not only continuing assessments, but they've actually changed examination dates and brought them forward. Do you remember Tracy and Leslie? Their exam was brought forward by a whole week and they suddenly had a week less to study and they were too sacred to

### **Take it up**

To take it up.

### **I remember that**

Do you remember that?

### **Yeah, I remember that**

It was last June, wasn't it?

### **Yeah**

Yeah, last year June

**And also the students did say that that one of the non-dental departments did that. I think Anatomy, no not Anatomy, Medicine or Surgery also did that**

They did now, did they?

**Yeah, students reported that in the interviews I did with them. And they said it was not a Dental subject, it's not an OHSC component, where because the lecturer was not there, the week that the exam was scheduled**

You see, I think that this kind of thing has always existed at this school. We've never had year coordinators before the new curriculum and we never had things like schedules and the students were much disempowered and the lecturers, especially the Medical departments who tend to be a bit heavy handed, have just, it's been ad – hock you know, and the students just had to deal with it. This is one of the reasons that some departments don't like the new curriculum, because they want to remain in their comfort zones and they want to be able to change assessment dates and go to the game reserve and so as they please. They don't want to commit. And then they perceive that as being dictated to. You know, they are not team players

**How has the Prosthodontic department been part of the transitioning of the curriculum in your view, and the support that the department gives to the students as a department?**

They're two very separate questions. I think that the Pros Department has to a greater extent than any other department taken on the transformation in assessment, in facilitating – we are willing to facilitate PBLs, in adopting some of those kind of student centred learning facilitating methods in their pedagogy much more than any other department as far as I can see. So there is your answer 'how has the Pros department taken it on'. The other question is 'support students' (*pause*). I find that difficult to evaluate. I think certainly in the third year where I've had my biggest input, I think students get a lot of support, but from myself and Dr Boitumelo. Second years, I have just started with them. There was unhappiness with the second year students, which I was aware of as many of them spoke to me about it.

**What kind of support have the second and third years or the third years mainly had from the department with the curriculum – with the Pros curriculum?**

Very clear programmes, very clear guidelines, very clear assessment criteria and I think that's made the students feel comfortable. And also the fact that both Pros coordinators – the year coordinator – are a Pros staff member. This is myself and Dr Boitumelo – who is the Pros coordinator. Both of us are very approachable. And they find this, their first clinical year, very very exciting. They really find it a real joy, you know, because 'at last, it's all coming together and they are treating patients, they're becoming real dentists'. And I think generally their teachers are very supportive, you know. The more experienced teachers have been put onto third year supervision

**Ok**

Which is a very good idea. Drs Bankowitz, Boitumelo and me

**What about Prof Tamlin?**

Yeah, Prof Tamlin as well. And that in itself is a huge support

**It is**

To have experienced teachers

**Is then, and that the letter from the third years praising the coordinator for the programme**

For what

**The letter from the third years, remember? Praising the Pros coordinator for the programme and how supportive they've been**

Yeah, for the first time in the history of the Wits Dental School, ever since I've been working here anyway

**As a collective as well**

As a collective. And one can actually take that seriously because it's not like trying to butter-up one particular person, you know

**Any other comments from you, with respect to the curriculum for the department, and how we're handling it, from your side – how we could improve it? How we could alter it, what we are doing right?**

We could do more developing of the academic staff, especially junior staff. I mean they're just thrown into it. And I'm not a hundred percent sure about the position on registrars as far as the work of the department goes. Should they get some development as teachers because they do some teaching, or should we just look upon them as 'well, they'll go anyway?' I'm not sure on the position of the registrars

**Now. Because before they used to have to do the PBL staff development workshops**

Uhm

**Ok, any other issue that you'd want me to take note of? I think we've covered the broad topics**

No I think that our department, I mean, we seriously review our teaching in terms of horizontal and vertical integration every single year, and we give it thought. I don't think any other department does that. I really don't think so. *(an eight second pause)* I don't think I want to say anything else, unless you want to ask me anything else

**No I've covered most of it**

You've covered...

**And hopefully the audio has covered most of it, all the comments**

Is it working?

**It's working. What's interesting, just for your information,, what's interesting I think. One interesting piece of information that I got from the students is how they prepare for their sessions – whether clinical or the tutorials – that it depends on the teacher that they have. If it is a teacher who draws them out and shows that they are interested in the students' learning, they're more willing to go that extra mile and prepare before – hand. Whereas if it is somebody else that they can see doesn't really give a toss as to whether they are learning or not**

Just wants to get through the lecture and bugger off

**Yeah. They also don't**

Did they name any names?

**No**

No

**Well I don't encourage them to name names. I thought that was interesting because my**

Of course

**My logic would be that, as students they would need to prepare for whatever it is they're going to be doing or they're going to be engaged with. But if they would rather not...**

Certainly. Certainly at second and third year, when they've got the time. They have a lot of time allocated to research in third year

**Is it?**

Yeah, and they could, they could be preparing in that time. And they've also got lots of manuals and the Pros book and all sorts of material in Pros. Maybe it's a good idea to give them some of the stuff that I give them, like the week before. You know, because they're still hungry, they might just read it. Certainly the better ones would read it. Yeah, that's a good idea. In fact, I'm giving them a revision thing on 'vertical jaw relationships' and I've got a very nice hand-out for them and I think I'll give it to them – before

**Because they did say that they actually also like to be given notes because it shows them what is relevant and what's not relevant. Whereas if they are not (given notes) if they don't get a guideline, a written guideline, from the teacher, it just makes some, most of them it makes them more fidgety and anxious**

It does yes. And also from the teacher's point of view, I find that they are so keen to take down every word that you say. Ok, certainly the second years. I've noticed this. That they're not thinking and they do not understand and that's why I like to give them notes and that frees them up to listen to me and to think and to understand. Because they take down every single word and then you ask them a question about what you've just said, and they don't know because they're rushing to take down every word. You know what I mean? So it's actually better to give them the notes, but same time I control very strictly attendance. Because the danger with giving stuff out is that they might not attend because they think 'oh well, I'll get it anyway' you know. So, I'm very strict about attendance – I point out that these are clinical tutorials and it's upped my responsibility to make sure that they attend otherwise I cannot allow them to work on patients. And I do a head count every time to check they're all there, then I ask who's missing and they must come and explain

**And they do?**

They do. They bring doctors certificates, and they come and explain, yes. Because I follow it up, you know. I don't just threaten them. Ok. And also I do trust that whoever is not there has got

**A reason**

Has a good reason, you know. I respect them enough and they know that

**And then your engagement with them in the clinics in terms of the BEST system, how is that going?**

Fine

**Is it?**

I find that a student's evaluation of their work or assessment of their own performance usually matches up 100% with mine

**Ok**

If that is what you are asking

**No, oh that as well as assessing for yourself whether the student understands that which they are doing**

I'm very experienced, very experienced you know

**Well**

You mean does the BEST help with that?

**Uh**

(pause) It kind of comes at the end of the session, you know. SO really my assessment of whether students are understanding what they do comes during the session and if they don't I explain. I mean I never just sit. I never for a moment sit during a session, or stand at the side looking out of the window. I'm continually circulating around watching what they're doing, to see if they understand. I also ask them questions so that I can confirm whether they understand and if there's a need for me to explain things that they are unclear with. I mean today some of the third year students didn't have patients because it's their first patient, it was a whole mess with bookings and they haven't got their instruments and you know. It was just a total mess. So I got one of the students to come up and fetch the skull and we revised muscles of mastication and I showed them how to examine muscles of mastication and they were examining each other and you know, I think that the chair-side or the clinic is the biggest teaching opportunity of the whole lot. And if I spot someone who doesn't, I mean some of them didn't know their muscles of mastication today. And I said to them 'if I ever spot you not knowing this, you are going to cancel your patient and you will go to the library and learn this because you need to know it.' So I do teach, and I check the next session whether they've learnt what I have told them to do. I tell them, like in today's session, I told them that 'now for your impression taking, you need to learn, look at your surface anatomy. You need to look at retention and stability and support and you need to read up about taking primary impressions and you need to know that for the next session. So, what was the question?

**Whether the BEST system, and your engagement; your usage of that, with the students - to assess whether they understand that which they're doing clinically is working?**

(Pause) I don't think the BEST has made a difference to me, because I've always done it this way, you know. I think it may be helpful to the students because if you give them an "S" you do discuss what it is that went wrong and you know that helps. You know, when I was a student, I used to do a piece of work and I'd get like, I mean, first of all, we weren't assessed in the clinics. We only had tests. Like we'd have tests half, mid-year and at the end of the year. Say a set – up: I would hand in a set – up and I'd get 72%. There was no criterion or reference assessment whatsoever. And I think most departments did not have criterion – referenced assessment before the new curriculum came in, you know. I think the BEST is a very good criterion – referenced assessment system. It's a good teaching tool. I think it teaches. I don't think it helps me to assess the students because I'm very experienced in that, but I think it's a very good teaching tool for the students to know where they've come short and to

**To critically appraise**

To critically appraise their own work and learn to have it critically appraised by their supervisor.

**Ok, thank you.**

Pleasure

*(Length of interview: 38:29)*